



# LINCARNATIONS

The Newsletter of the ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS

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Now He Belongs to the Stages

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## Message From G. William Horsley to the Assn. of Lincoln Presenters

### Convention II, Springfield, Il., April 14, 1996

Horsley photo



I'm certainly glad to be here today and see you people. I'm surely the oldest Abe here. I go back as Lincoln to 1941. It has always been a pleasure to play Lincoln. In 1921 my dad bought me a book on Lincoln, and I have idolized Abraham Lincoln ever since. In 1945 I began as Lincoln in Robert Sherwood's "Abe Lincoln in Illinois," and played before crowds of three to five thousand a night for 17 years in New Salem. The happiest moments of my life have been as Abe on the stage at New Salem. I have been a successful lawyer and spent 20 years in the legislature and 7 in the senate.

There has been less and less emphasis on Lincoln in the schools, and boys and girls in our country today need more of Lincoln. Therefore, I want to give this wonderful group of Lincolns this message, that you should sponsor new (and old) projects, such as (1) plays like "Abe Lincoln in Illinois." (2) Get more authors to

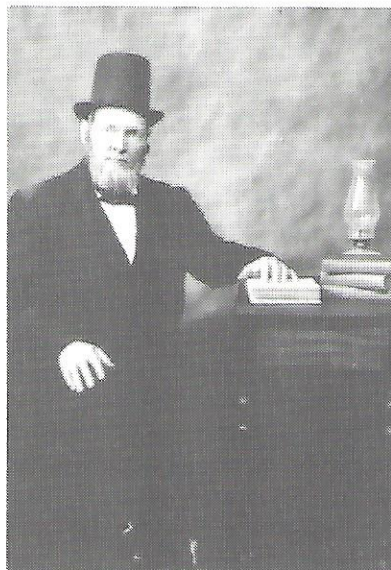
write plays about Lincoln. (3) Not only plays, but various forms of programs. (4) You Lincolns need to stir the idealism of people. If you love a man, study him, and it will add to your enthusiasm for presenting him. The classroom kids will love it if you're enthusiastic and have studied Lincoln, and you will get a big, big feeling of satisfaction by playing Lincoln. So the ALP should sponsor programs and plays and help educate, and let Lincoln be your ideal.

### Lincoln's Dream of Unity by David Rasmussen

I had a dream some years before  
That tugged and grabbed it seared my brain  
As time passed on the dream meant more  
The thought is there, it doesn't change.  
My dream of one throughout the land  
A house divided cannot stand  
Southern, northern, hand in hand  
This can happen in our land

A drummer boy too young to die  
With drum and drumsticks at his side  
Staring lifeless at the sky  
His blood did flow there is no breath  
Glassy fixed and tortured eye  
Flies buzz round and stench of death  
A house divided will not stand  
My dream is one throughout this land

This dream of mine, it drives me on  
There is a price to pay my friend  
The dream it lives and will not leave  
Muddied ground now stained in red



With sick and wounded, thousands dead  
A soldier gasps last words unsaid  
A house divided shall not stand  
My dream and hope is for our land

Widows come to plead with me  
To stop the horror, end the war  
How I wish that this could be  
I pray to God that we will see  
A nation where all slaves are free  
A house divided cannot stand  
I pray to God for this our land

This dream of mine, it holds me fast  
Years pass by, the dream remains  
How much longer will it last?  
Winter, spring, the seasons change  
The dream is real, I cannot sleep  
Tombstones stand, stare and weep  
Our house is divided, it cannot stand  
I pray to God for this our land.



# LINCOLN IN AMERICAN MEMORY by Merrill Peterson

## A Review by Charles L. Brame (The Living Lincoln)

When it comes to Abe's ancestors, are you a "chin flyer" or a "dunghiller"?<sup>1</sup> Is Sandburg's Prairie Years history or poetry? What about his War Years?<sup>2</sup> Is that long walk to return the overcharged six and one-half cents fact or legend?<sup>3</sup> What about those barrels of whiskey old Tom Lincoln received for his farm in Kentucky and lost on a flat-boat on the way to Indiana?<sup>4</sup> What is the most reproduced portrait in the world and who made it?<sup>5</sup> Was President Reagan correct in his quoting "Lincoln's Cannotments" before the Republican National Convention in 1988?<sup>6</sup> How many members were in the Association of Lincoln Presenters in 1992?<sup>7</sup>

Want the answers? These and a multitude of others are available in Merrill Peterson's Lincoln in American Memory. Peterson is Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Virginia with a long and productive writing career. In this work he provides a delightful history of Old Abe's place in American thought and imagination from the moment of his passing until the present. Both the real Abe and the folklore one are examined. In an equitable and delightful way he weaves the warp of folklore with the woof of historical truth into an enjoyable and necessary book for all ALP'ers.

The five main themes, or the building blocks of the Lincoln image, are examined throughout Peterson's work. They present Lincoln as Savior of the Union, Great Emancipator, Man of the People, the First American, and the Self-made Man. They stand alone or blend with our art, politics, music, history, social and economic institutions. Throughout the years the style and form of expression of these themes have varied, but the themes continue in novels, plays, poems, histories, painting, religion and political groups.

Most of the material written about Lincoln the first 75 years after his death was either produced by friends and acquaintances or by representatives of vested interests promoting a special agenda or point of view. By design, hindsight, enthusiasm or the errors of faulty memory they produced a folk hero. Their Lincoln was the protector of turtles and hogs, the honest store clerk who walked miles to return a few pennies he overcharged a customer. Lincoln became the epitome of virtue who always told the truth and did no wrong, the rugged individualist who drank from whiskey barrels and was the biggest buck in the lick.

Commencing about the second decade of this century, according to Peterson, a change in the treatment and evaluation of Lincoln took place. The professionals became involved - historians, psychologists, doctors, lawyers, et al. They subjected the folk hero to the acid test of their specific brand of truth. Was he a good lawyer? Did he save the Union? Was he that warm, kind, affable man who pardoned condemned soldiers, freed the blacks and kissed little girls, or was he a cold, calculating, cunning politician? Some debunked Abe, other down played his importance and many produced serious and conscientious studies which greatly enhanced our knowledge about him. Many of the myths were destroyed and other were placed in proper perspective such as the Rutledge romance, the true origin about his honesty, his prowess as a lawyer, the relationship with his wife, etc. Interestingly, Peterson rightfully concludes that the result of all of his research has had little effect on Abe's earlier image with the nation and the rest of the world. By their efforts they sought the truth to free us from a folk hero and made us a greater one.

This book should be frequently read and thoroughly digested by all ALP members. The author has evaluated a vast reservoir of historical and artistic works providing a presenter with reliable information. Also, he gives the sources of his research that would help presenters who desire further knowledge. Now no one need present unsubstantiated folklore and myth about the 16th President. Abe was once asked if he ever lied? His reply, "Oh, no! I never lie, but occasionally I take economies with the truth." By consulting Lincoln in American Memory, we have no need to take economies with the truth, but should we occasionally do that, let's be sure that the larger truth redeems the falsity of detail.

1. The "chin flyers" maintain that the Lincoln family was rather well to do; the "dunghills" believe, as Abe did, that he was the product of an undistinguished family.
2. Sandburg's Prairie Years is not reliable history; the War Years is reliable.
3. In 1883, Horatio Alger's Abraham Lincoln, the Backwoods Boy manufactured both legends along with those tortured turtles.
4. Rev. William Thayer "distilled" the whiskey tale in 1882. Tom Lincoln was a Baptist deacon!!
5. Victor Brenner made the portrait reproduced on the Lincoln penny, said to be the world's most reproduced picture.
6. The Cannotments used by Reagan were written by John Henry Boetcker in 1916, and not by Abe.
7. Yes, we are in Peterson's book, pp. 375-6.



## A LINCOLN "MIRACLE" by Dan Bassuk, Ph.D



Come February twelfth, Lincoln's birthday, you will find me at a Lincoln school portraying Abraham Lincoln. For eight years this has been my way of celebrating Lincoln's birthday, and I have appeared at 16 schools named for the 16th President. But 1996 was special. This year I was invited to perform at the Lincoln Middle School in Catasauqua, Pennsylvania, and here a "miracle" had occurred.

On my first visit to this school, I pointed to a portrait of Lincoln prominently displayed, and was informed that this picture has a unique history. When I returned on Lincoln's birthday, I was presented with newspapers going back more than fifty years that described the following event.

On September 24, 1940, a raging fire engulfed the Lincoln School in Catasauqua and reduced it to charred debris. 400,000 gallons of water could not save the ten room, three story structure. But one thing did survive the inferno. The local newspaper reported that "strange as it may seem, 'Abe Lincoln' survived the recent disastrous fire in the Lincoln school building in Catasauqua. A photographer found a portrait of the great statesman hanging unscathed on a wall amid otherwise complete ruin."

The Lincoln portrait that survived the flames is an artist's rendition of the famous photograph of Lincoln taken by Mathew Brady on February 9, 1864, the one that appears on the five dollar bill. It shows the bearded President four days before his 55th birthday, and three months after he delivered his great speech at Gettysburg. He looks dignified, confident, assured. The poet, Walt Whitman, who carefully scrutinized Lincoln's face stated that no contemporary artist had captured its deep and subtle expression, and a Michelangelo was required. However, the students at Lincoln Middle School have a glorious portrait to behold.

One wonders how a building can burn to the ground yet one thing survive. Is what survives indestructible? Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, Lincoln endures at Lincoln Middle School. Before I left the Lincoln School on Lincoln's birthday, I looked at that portrait again and his words echoed in my mind, "of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

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## "Harding and Lincoln" by James V. Horrigan

This is the fourth in a series of articles on Lincoln's influence on American Presidents by associate editor, Ted TR Zalewski. James Horrigan is an historian and author of two screen plays about the life and times of President Harding.

When President Warren G. Harding dedicated the Lincoln Memorial on May 30, 1922, the scandals surrounding his administration were about to erupt. It had been disclosed a month earlier that Harding's Secretary of the Interior, Albert Fall, had entered into a corrupt bargain with private oil interests and turned over the nation's rights to valuable petroleum deposits at Tea Pot Dome, Wyoming. Although the true breadth of Fall's wrongdoing had yet to be uncovered, at the time Harding dedicated the Lincoln Memorial, the 29th President's administration was under an ever-darkening cloud.

Noting that Lincoln never ran short of critics, Harding delivered an address which contained this quote from the 16th President which he found strongly analogous to his own situation. "If I were trying to read, much less answer all the attacks made upon me, this shop might as well be closed for an other business. I do the best I know how, the very best I can; and I mean to keep on doing it to the end. If the end brings me out all right," he told an audience which included Robert Todd Lincoln, "what is said against me will not amount to anything. If the end brings me out all wrong, ten angels swearing I was right will make no difference."

In the dedication, he spoke in poignant irony of what he called a "matchless memorial, whose 48

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## **Lincoln Days Celebration** by Vicki Woodard **Hodgenville, Kentucky, October 14, 1995**

Seven Lincolns officially entered the contest, Joe Woodard, B. F. McClerren, Jim Boatright, all from Illinois; Charles Long, Joe Hamilton and newcomer Leroy Snyder, all from Kentucky; and Merlin Stroud from Indiana. Earlier contest winners Jim Sayre and Bill Sublett removed themselves from competition, graciously cheering their counterparts along and each saying a few words to the assembled crowd. And Cliff Howard joined his wife Joan (as Mary Todd Lincoln) for a brief stage presentation as votes were being tabulated.

Earlier an assortment of Lincoln wives had participated in a Mary Todd look-alike contest. Dorothy McClerren won first-place, followed by Ruthanne Boatright, second, and Janie Hamilton, third. Although that contest was based on appearance only, Dorothy entertained an appreciative audience with a short excerpt from her stage show.

Success ran in the family that day. B. F. McClerren was named a winner, so was Joe Woodard and Merlin Stroud.

Perhaps the greatest honor went to Charles Long whose daughter climbed on stage, pulled her father to her side, and proceeded to honor him with a testimonial filled with words of love and respect. She talked of her father's first thoughts after a major heart attack, requiring multiple by-pass surgery, and the expressions of regret for having to miss Hodgenville's Lincoln Days. She spoke of his love for his portrayal of Abraham Lincoln and the opportunities it provided him to share Lincoln's ideals with others. And she talked of his pleasure at providing small school children with pictures of the great emancipator and how he loved to see their little faces light up when they saw their bright shiny new pennies.

An evening of music and laughter concluded the day's events as most (if not all) Lincolns and their wives attended a Saturday night performance at a Lincoln Jamboree. Jim Sayre concluded the evening's entertainment with an emotional rendition of The Gettysburg Address, as the band performed The Battle Hymn of the Republic.

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### **Harding and Lincoln** Continued from page 3

columns, representing 48 states in the concord of union, testify that the 'end brought him out all right.'" Although he was in error, Harding's speech contained an interesting presage of the "matchless memorial" which would one day be erected in his honor. The Lincoln Memorial has only 36 columns, not 48. They represent the 36 states "in the concord of union" at the time of Lincoln's death. Ironically, when the Harding Memorial was dedicated a few years later in Marion, Ohio, the monument was designed with 48 columns. At long last, Harding's metaphor about a memorial with columns "representing 48 states in the concord of union" would be erected. Or would it?

Some years later it was discovered that the building was actually constructed with just 46 columns. A Harding biographer described how the Harding Memorial Association ran out of money and decided to omit the final two columns, "hoping no one would notice." If Harding's perception of 48 columns at the Lincoln Memorial was sufficient proof that Abraham Lincoln had "come out all right," then is the presence of an anomalous 46 at the Harding Memorial proof that Warren Harding had "come out all wrong?"

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

1. The 1995 Lincoln awards of the ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS went to Jim Sayre (Kentucky), Dorothy McClerren (Illinois), and Bruce and Mary Hanks (Minnesota).
2. The second annual convention of the ASSOCIATION OF LINCOLN PRESENTERS was held in Springfield, Illinois on April 13, 14, 15. More than 40 Abrahams and ten Marys attended. Also present were Franklin and Teddy Roosevelt, Ward Lamon, William Crook, Senator Douglas and Rose Greenhow. The keynote address was delivered by Brian Lamb of C-SPAN.
3. The third convention of the ALP will be held in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on April 25-27, 1997. Hold this date.
4. A comprehensive directory of all members of the Assn. of Lincoln Presenters is currently being prepared by Dr. Gordon Vincent and should be available during the summer.
5. Bud Green was in a serious head-on collision and suffered a broken hip. Condolences can be sent to him at Route 2, Box 16, Versailles, MO 65084.
6. Mayhaven Publishers have agreed to publish a book called Lincoln in Scotland Forever by Dr. Dan Bassuk (ALP) and Paul Kallina of the Lincoln Group in D.C..